



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING**

HELENA FAMILY YMCA YOUTH FLOOR HOCKEY



Parent/Coach Handbook

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HELENA FAMILY YMCA
1200 N Last Chance Gulch • (406) 442-9622
***Welcome Parents and Coaches to the
Helena Family YMCA***

YOUTH SPORTS PHILOSOPHY

The Youth Floor Hockey program at the Helena Family YMCA gives children in Pre-K through 2nd Grade the opportunity to learn sports skills in a supervised recreational environment. We believe that participating in sports should be *FUN* and that every player should have an *EQUAL OPPORTUNITY* to play. The emphasis of our program is on the *DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS and SPORTSMANSHIP*. We de-emphasize winning and ensure equal playing time for all players.

CARING, HONESTY, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY

The YMCA has made a national commitment to help young people learn the values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility, all necessary to hold us together as a community. We seek to incorporate these values in all that we do and to partner with families in teaching these essential values to our young people. By teaching these values during the practices of this youth sports program, we hope to give participating children the opportunity to become better teammates both on and off the field.

SEASON FAQ's:

Games: Teams have one weeknight practice per week – day and time will vary by the season. We try to avoid Fridays. Games last approximately 60-minutes and are held in the YMCA Gym.

Practices: Teams get one weeknight practice per week at the day and time chosen during registration. Pre-K and Kindergarten practices last 35-45 minutes. 1st and 2nd Grade practices last 60-minutes. All practices are held in the YMCA Gym.

Equipment: Sticks, pucks, and goals are provided by the Y. Please wear your YMCA jersey (distributed by the first game), athletic shorts or pants, knee-high socks, and shin guards if you have them. Wear non-streaking athletic shoes (please no snow boots or sandals).

Game Schedules: A link to access your game schedule will be sent out in the pre-season email, typically 1-2 weeks before the season starts. Game schedules are accessed through YGametime.

- YGametime can always be accessed by going to helenaymca.org. Click "YGametime" from along the top. Then click "Sports and Programs" from along the top. Choose your division from the dropdown. Scroll down to see full schedules.

Snacks: Although not necessary, many kids "live" for the after-game snack! Help out your coach by volunteering to create a snack schedule for parents.

Weather: It is our policy to cancel games only in extreme weather conditions. If games must be cancelled, the Coaches will be notified and a text blast will be sent out.

You will only receive notice via text if you OPT IN to receive them. Visit YGametime to sign-up for ALERTS.

Cancellations, substitutes, and make-up games: Please be mindful that our coaches are all volunteering their time! Sometimes illness or last-minute cancellations are inevitable. Coaches will reach out to their teams to find substitutes if they cannot make a practice or game. Please volunteer if you can!

If a game does end up being cancelled, we will try our best to schedule make-up games during regular practice times throughout the week.

Parking: Games must start on time so the players during the rest of the game day don't experience delays. Given the season, there may be multiple sports happening at once at the Y, and we share a parking lot with Centennial Park. Please allow an extra 10-15 minutes to arrive before the start of your game!

YMCA COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES:

Coach a group of kids in a safe, positive, and inclusive environment. Remember that sports at the Y focus on fundamentals and sportsmanship – not competition! Every player gets equal playing time, regardless of ability.

Contact all the families on your roster when prompted after receiving your finalized practice details and game schedule. Introduce yourself, remind them of practice time, and ask now for any assistants or substitutes to cover you during the season if needed.

Distribute team jerseys, provided by the Y. This may involve swinging by the Y before a practice or game to pick up your team's jerseys.

Inform your team if you will miss a practice or game and ask other parents for substitutes. Please don't cancel practice unless it is an emergency. 99% of the time we've seen that a parent will be happy to cover you for one day.

Designate a team parent to assist with a snack schedule if you like.

Ask for support if needed! Sports Coordinators at the Y are there to help you with scheduling needs, roster concerns, and to provide extra equipment if desired. Players bring their own balls to practice. The Y can also provide scrimmage vests, whistles, stopwatches, and cones BY REQUEST.

Know the rules at each level of play. The YMCA modifies rules to create a positive experience for the kids. As children grow and their skills get better, the rules grow with them. Check out the Coach's Corner on YGametime for a "rules cheat sheet."

Maintain good relationships with your players and their families by being positive, communicative, and promoting the YMCA values in your actions. You are a major role model for your team!

Parent Agreement

As a parent in the Helena Family YMCA's Youth Sports Program...

- 1.** I will remember that children participate to have fun and that the game is for youth, not adults.
- 2.** I will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
- 3.** I will not engage in unsportsmanlike or disrespectful conduct with any official, coach, player, volunteer, Y staff member, or other parent.
- 4.** I will teach my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- 5.** I will teach my child to treat other players, coaches, officials, and spectators with respect regardless of race, creed, gender, or ability.
- 6.** I will praise my child for competing fairly and trying hard, and make my child feel like a winner every time. Remember, we don't keep score at the Y!
- 7.** I will respect the officials and their authority during games.
- 8.** I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol and I will refrain from their use at all sports events.

Pre-K – Kindergarten Floor Hockey Rules

YMCA Youth Sports is unique, emphasizing skill-development, sportsmanship, and teamwork. We de-emphasize competition and instead focus on the fun and learning that sports can provide. The YMCA also promotes equal playing time for all its participants. All players must play an equal amount of playing time in each game.

EQUIPMENT:

- YMCA jersey, athletic shorts or sweats, shin guards if you have them
- Athletic shoes – no boots or sandals
- Players are provided with:
 - Plastic sticks with foam heads
 - Foam pucks ranging 3-5" diameter

COURT SIZE: half-court basketball court (played sideways)

NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

- Minimum to play: 3
- Maximum: 4
- No goalie

Substitutions are unlimited, but please be mindful of the YMCA's equal play rule.

If a team has less than the minimum number of players, there are 3 options:

- The team forfeits the game
- The opposing team plays short to match
- The opposing team lends players to the short team

REFEREES:

- Coaches act as referees for games.
- Feel free to assign a co-coach or parent volunteer to help referee.
- Rule cheat sheets will be available on game days with Y staff.
- Coaches also act as timekeepers. Stopwatches are available.
- Continue to focus on skill and technique development such as passing the puck, dribbling the puck, stick handling and shooting. Overemphasis on set plays and game tactics often take away from overall player development.

GAME DURATION:

- Four 8-minute quarters. If needed, feel free to switch to 6 or 7-minute quarters depending on player stamina.
- Time will continue to run (except in timeouts), with no overtime.
- Each team gets two 1-minute timeouts per half (4 per game). Unused timeouts do not carry over.
- Teams get a 1-minute break in between quarters.
- 5-minute halftime.
- Games should not last longer than 45-minutes total.

START OF PLAY:

- Face-off at center court.
- Players CANNOT score from a face-off.
- Players should be encouraged to pass the puck to another player at the face-off.
- Face-offs happen at the start of every quarter, after a penalty (except penalties that result in a Free Shot), and after any stoppage of play.

In vs. Out of Bounds:

- Walls, doors, and corners are in play.
- If the puck becomes trapped, play stops and a face-off occurs.
- Players may use caroms (purposefully rebounding off a surface) to pass and/or shoot.

RULES OF PLAY:

- Pucks cannot be stepped on, kicked, or moved with any player's foot.
 - In case of violation: the team that last had the puck earns an uncontested face-off from center court.
- Players should not drag the puck behind or in front of them with their stick (trapping the puck in an unbroken drag between the stick and the floor).
 - Players should 'dribble' or pass to a teammate.
- All players are allowed to cross the half-court line to press/rush the opponent's goal.
 - At least 1 defensive player should remain behind as guard.
- Off-sides will be called when an offensive player is behind the last defensive player of the opposing team without the puck.
 - In case of off-sides: uncontested face-off is awarded to the defensive team from center court.
- Remember, score is not kept! Goals scored will result in a new face-off at center court.

FOULS AND PENALTIES:

- Hockey sticks should not rise above a player's waist when swinging (either on the back-swing or the follow-through).
- Warnings will be given for rough play, high-sticking, checking, and unsportsmanlike play.
 - In case of violation of any of the above: a Free Shot is granted to the non-offending team from the free throw line in front of the opposing goal.
 - Checking: any instance of forcibly disrupting an offensive player in control of the puck, including pushing the offensive player's body against a wall or out of bounds.
- Use instances of most penalties as teaching moments, focusing on teaching what not to do / what to do.

1st/2nd Grade Floor Hockey Rules

YMCA Youth Sports is unique, emphasizing skill-development, sportsmanship, and teamwork. We de-emphasize competition and instead focus on the fun and learning that sports can provide. The YMCA also promotes equal playing time for all its participants. All players must play an equal amount of playing time in each game.

EQUIPMENT:

- YMCA jersey, athletic shorts or sweats, shin guards if you have them
- Athletic shoes – no boots or sandals
- Players are provided with:
 - Plastic sticks with foam heads
 - Foam pucks ranging 3-5" diameter

COURT SIZE: full-court basketball court

NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

- Minimum to play: 3
- Maximum: 5
- Yes goalie

Substitutions are unlimited, but please be mindful of the YMCA's equal play rule.

If a team has less than the minimum number of players, there are 3 options:

- The team forfeits the game
- The opposing team plays short to match
- The opposing team lends players to the short team

REFEREES:

- Coaches act as referees for games.
- Feel free to assign a co-coach or parent volunteer to help referee.
- Rule cheat sheets will be available on game days with Y staff.
- Coaches also act as timekeepers. Stopwatches are available.
- Continue to focus on skill and technique development such as passing the puck, dribbling the puck, stick handling, shooting and how to play the goalie position. Overemphasis on set plays and game tactics often take away from overall player development.

GAME DURATION:

- Four 8-minute quarters.
- Time will continue to run (except in timeouts), with no overtime.
- Each team gets two 1-minute timeouts per half (4 per game). Unused timeouts do not carry over.
- Teams get a 1-minute break in between quarters.
- 5-minute halftime.
- Games should not last longer than 45-minutes total.

START OF PLAY:

- Face-off at center court.
- Players CANNOT score from a face-off.
- Players should be encouraged to pass the puck to another player at the face-off.
- Face-offs happen at the start of every quarter, after a penalty (except penalties that result in a Free Shot), and after any stoppage of play.

In vs. Out of Bounds:

- Walls, doors, and corners are in play.
- If the puck becomes trapped, play stops and a face-off occurs.
- Players may use caroms (purposefully rebounding off a surface) to pass and/or shoot.

RULES OF PLAY:

- Pucks cannot be stepped on, kicked, or moved with any player's foot.
 - In case of violation: the team that last had the puck earns an uncontested face-off from center court.
- Players should not drag the puck behind or in front of them with their stick (trapping the puck in an unbroken drag between the stick and the floor).
 - Players should 'dribble' and run with the puck or pass to a teammate.
- All players are allowed to cross the half-court line to press/rush the opponent's goal, including the goalie.
 - However, it is advised that at least 2 defensive players should remain behind as guard.
- Off-sides will be called when an offensive player is behind the last defensive player of the opposing team without the puck.
 - In case of off-sides: uncontested face-off is awarded to the defensive team from center court.
- Remember, score is not kept! Goals scored will result in a new face-off at center court.
- All players should have the chance to play as goalie. Rotations can be made between quarters or any time there is a stoppage of play.

FOULS AND PENALTIES:

- Hockey sticks should not rise above a player's waist when swinging (either on the back-swing or the follow-through).
- Warnings will be given for rough play, high-sticking, checking, and unsportsmanlike play.
 - In case of violation of any of the above: a Free Shot is granted to the non-offending team from the free throw line in front of the opposing goal.
 - Checking: any instance of forcibly disrupting an offensive player in control of the puck, including pushing the offensive player's body against a wall or out of bounds.
- Use instances of most penalties as teaching moments, focusing on teaching what not to do / what to do.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE COACHING

Remember, children develop and learn at their own individual pace. The developmental information below is a guide only. Use your judgment when it comes to getting through to your players. Every team will have children that overlap into both developmental levels.

Pre-K – Kindergarten Level

- Rules are not as important to this age group. Players may forget the rules from week to week. Think of the games as a skills demonstration.
- Remind them which direction they are supposed to go. Players may respond well to a parent or coach running alongside them or placing them in a certain spot.
- The first two weeks of play are usually chaotic. This is fine! Focus on skills like running with their sticks, passing the puck, understanding which goal they are aiming towards, and learning how to play with other kids while listening to their coach.

First – Second Grade Level

- At this age they love rules. They like to know what is going on and what they are supposed to be doing.
- Explain some of the rules each week without overwhelming them. It's alright if kids don't know every rule of the game until the end of the season.
- Players should start understanding how to make their own choices within the game. Think of yourself as a facilitator, rather than a controller of each child's move.
- Remember to build team pride as the players form positive relationships with each other.

All Grade Levels

- Make sure all team members are kept active as much as possible. Remember the Y's equal play rule – regardless of a player's ability.
- Avoid long lines with only one player going at a time during practices.
- Use assistant coaches or parents whenever possible to split up the team, allowing you to have more kids active at one time.

Potential Weekly Schedule for Practice

WARM-UP (5 MINUTES)

- Explain the importance of warming up our bodies to prevent injury and get ready to play.
- Form your team in a circle or line and introduce stretching and conditioning exercises. As the season progresses, have players volunteer to lead these exercises.

SKILL FOCUS (25 Minutes)

- Explain the importance of focusing on skill development and how that will help them in the games.
- Focus each week on a different fundamental skill of floor hockey: controlling the puck, swings and passing, dribbling, shooting, goalie (for the older division), and team play.
- For the older divisions, start to introduce foundational rules, fouls, and penalties.
- Review previously taught skills each week.

TEAM TALK - VALUES (10 Minutes)

- Sit your team down in a circle and use this time as a physical break while introducing one of the core sportsmanship values of sports at the Y.
- Players can volunteer to come up with examples of each value (such as a time they showed respect or honesty).
- Review the previously taught value from the week before. Discuss where you saw players using that value during Saturday's game.
- Remember that each player brings something unique. It should be the goal to verbally praise and reward each team member for something positive they showed during the last game or practice.

SCRIMMAGE (20 Minutes)

- Use the end of each practice for a scrimmage, concentrating on skills they've been working on during the practice.
- For older divisions, basic strategy or formations can be introduced.
- For younger divisions, feel free to use co-coaches or volunteer parents to help run alongside the players and help them get into place.
- The YMCA has scrimmage vests available on site by request. Please ask a Sports Coordinator to borrow vests, whistles, stopwatches, cones, or flags!

STRETCHING EXERCISES

Arm circles: Rotate arms forward and backward, in both big and small circles.

Jumping jacks: Self explanatory 😊

Trunk twister: Twist side-to-side from the abdomen, keeping the hips stationary.

Hip rotations: Standing with feet hip-width apart, hands on hips, circle the hips in a complete rotation (front, side, back, side). Do both clockwise and counter-clockwise.

Bent-knee sit-ups: Lying on back on the ground, bend knees to 90 degrees in the air. Hands behind head, sit up to touch the opposite knee with each elbow.

Push-ups: Can be done from toes or knees depending on player comfort and ability.

Windmill: With arms stretched out to the side, feet shoulder-width apart, bend over at the waist to touch the opposite foot before coming back to standing.

Superperson: Lying on stomach, arms extended overhead, raise one leg, lower, switch, repeat.

Alternate knee hug: Lie on the back, lift knee and hug it to chest. Switch leg.

Lunge stretch: Feet hip width apart, step one foot back about one leg-length from the front foot, bend both knees, then come back to standing.

Ankle and knee twists: Place the toe of one foot on the ground and rotate the ankle clockwise and counter-clockwise. Switch. Then stand with feet and knees together, hands on hips, bend knees to rotate side, front, side, then back to standing straight.

Quad stretch: Standing, lift one bent leg and reach behind the grab the ankle. Pull the ankle as close to the body as possible, hold for a stretch.

Calf raises: Standing with feet hip-width apart, slowly raise up onto toes, then back down.

AFTER STRETCHING: Consider 1-2 conditioning exercises (sprints, team jogs, or running drills).

BASICS, SKILLS, AND DRILLS

These drills and games are intended to develop the basic skills of floor hockey. Use individual and partner drills frequently. These give each player more of an opportunity to practice and handle the puck than they would in group drills. Group drills may leave players standing around and lead to a loss of focus.

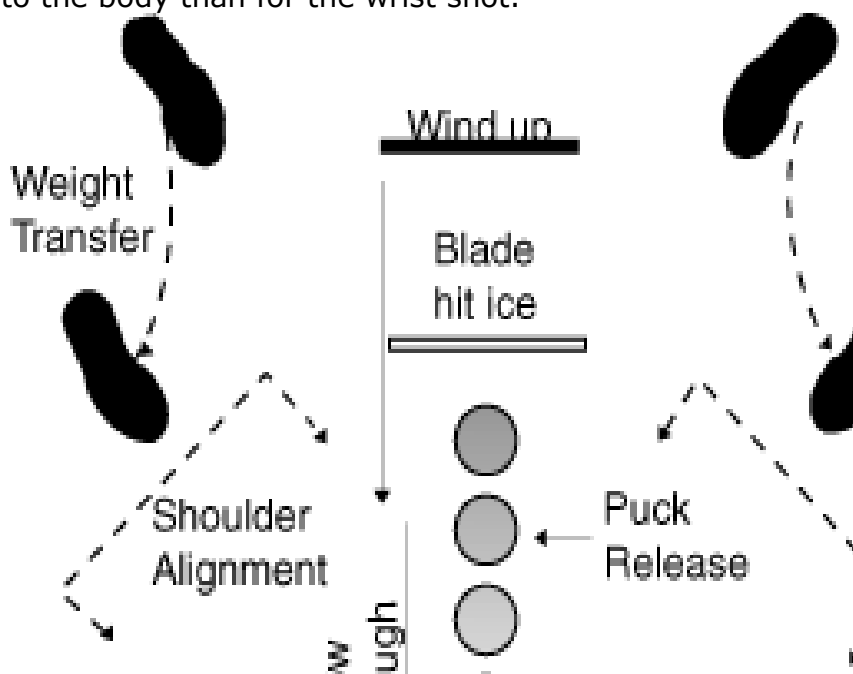
Remember, drills don't have winners or losers! Try and provide one praise and one small correction (if needed) for each player. It's not necessary to rank players by who did best and worst.

Introduce the READY POSITION for the start of drills. A good ready position means players are alert, focused, and ready to move in any direction. Players may respond well to a special code-word or call-and-response chant that means "get into ready position!"

PROPER GRIP AND STANCE:

Use the **proper stick grip** and take on the **proper hockey stance**. Move your hand halfway down the shaft and lock your hand in position. Position your body at a 45-degree angle to the net. Bring the puck beside the toes of your front foot.

Keep the line of shooting far enough away to provide good arm movement but close enough to your body to be able to strongly snap the blade of the stick on the shooting surface and maintain balance. The line of shooting for the snap shot is closer to the body than for the wrist shot.



Snap shot: Position the stick blade 4 to 6 inches above the floor and 10 to 14 inches behind the puck (the blade is centered on the puck). Rotate your wrists so that the blade of the stick is parallel to the floor. In this position, your weight should be on your back foot. As you transfer your weight forward, snap through the puck hitting the shooting surface a few inches before the puck. The power of the shot comes from the strong and sudden top hand pull and lower hand push on the stick and the snapping of the wrist as well as the body weight transferred on the stick. The follow through for the snap shot is short.

Advanced snap shot: Start with the puck way out from the body in line with your back foot, then move the puck to the release point in line with the front foot. As the puck slides to the release point, position the blade 4 to 6 inch off the ice and 12 inches behind the puck and quickly snap the puck at the target.

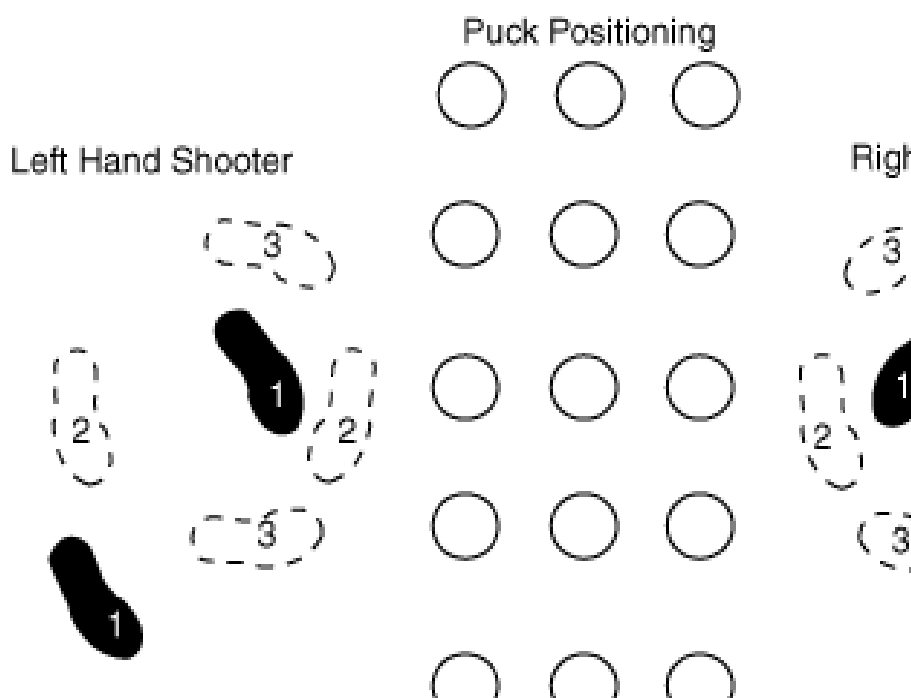
SHOOTING:

Work on mastering the shot motion. Players should practice shooting while looking at the target (look up at the target, down at the puck and then back up at the target as you make the shot). Players should first learn low shots, then develop strength to master high shots. Players should learn the **wrist shot** and the **backhand shot** first, then the snap shot and finally the slap shot.

Start with correct stick grip and hockey stance. Have players experiment with the 'line of shooting' (the starting placement of the puck) at different distances from their body. Players should select the place where they can transfer power to the shot while also maintaining good balance.

When **practicing shooting**, the primary focus should always be on hitting the **target** – not shooting the puck clear over the net with brute force/power. The most **accurate** and **powerful shots** are made when using the ideal shooting position (puck in the right position and player in the right wind-up position). Players in YMCA Floor Hockey should be given ample time to set up a shot within the game. Remember, our focus is on learning skills – not keeping score or using aggressive defense!

Advanced players should practice all hockey shots while standing at different angles to the net (feet pointing at the net, feet angled at 45 degrees with the net and feet positioned sideways to the net) and with the puck positioned at different locations.

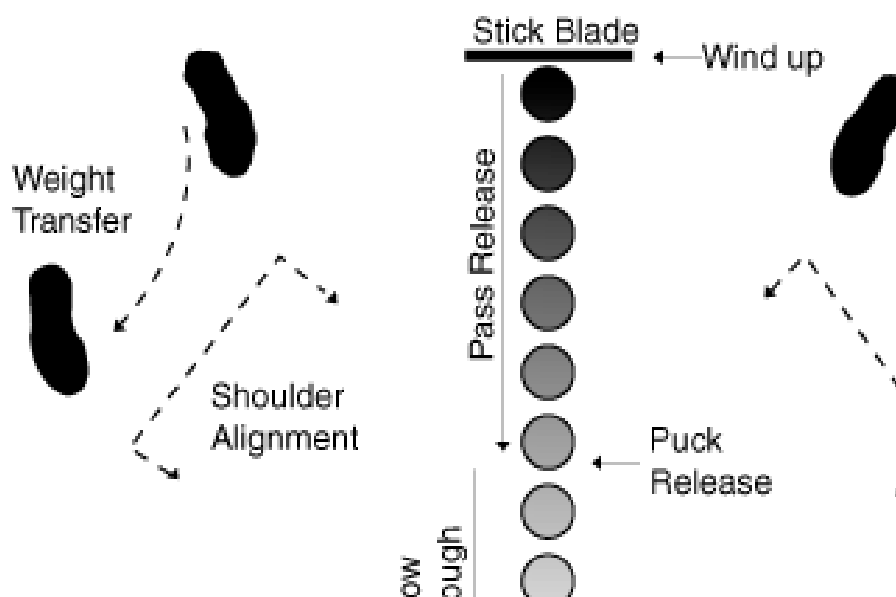


THE WRIST SHOT:

The **wrist shot** is the most accurate shot and can be released fairly quickly. This is the shot that a player should learn first.

Use the proper **stick grip** and take on the proper hockey stance. For the wrist shot, move your lower hand halfway down the shaft to add power to the shot. Position your body at a **45-degree angle** to the net. Bring the puck behind or even with your back leg. Lower your shoulder as you reach back and down with your stick to position the puck. Keep the puck in the middle of the blade with the blade tilted over the puck (rotate your wrists). In this position, your weight should be on your back leg.

Sweep the puck forward while transferring your weight toward your front foot and rotating your body forward. As the stick blade crosses your body, transfer body weight on your stick while pushing forward with your lower hand and pulling backward with your top hand. The puck is released when it reaches your front foot and your shoulders are square to the net. At the point of release, your wrists turn causing the stick blade to turn out and lift the puck. After the puck is released, follow through pointing the toe of your stick toward the target. The height of the shot depends on how much you rotate your wrists and how high your follow-through is.

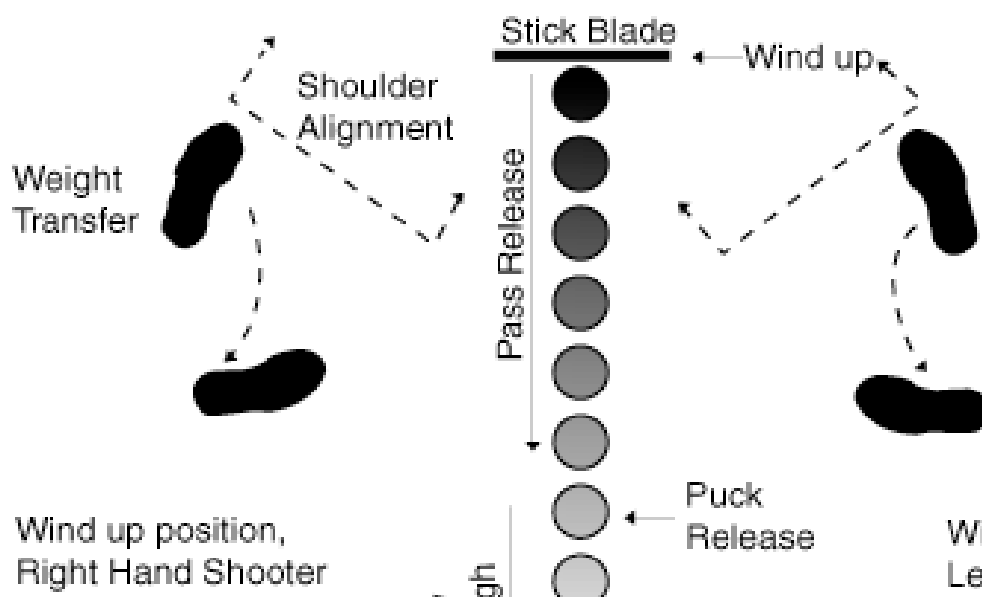


THE BACKHAND SHOT:

The **backhand shot** is the most difficult shot to learn. This shot is very effective when cutting in front of the goal or when the pass is made on your backhand side at close range to the net.

Use the proper stick grip and take on the proper hockey stance. Move your hand down one-third the length of the shaft. Bring the puck just behind or even with your back leg. Position the puck on the back third of the blade (in the middle of the straight section close to the shaft). Roll your wrists to tilt the blade over the puck. Keep the line of shooting close enough to your body so that you stay balanced but far enough to provide good arm movement.

In the **wind-up position**, your body weight should be on the leg closest to the puck. With your head up looking at your target, move your arms across your body shifting your weight to your front leg (dip your front shoulder down and lean on the stick). You really have to roll your wrists as the shot is released and point the toe of the stick to the target. Follow through until your palm is pointing up. The higher the follow through, the higher the puck will rise.



THE SLAP SHOT:

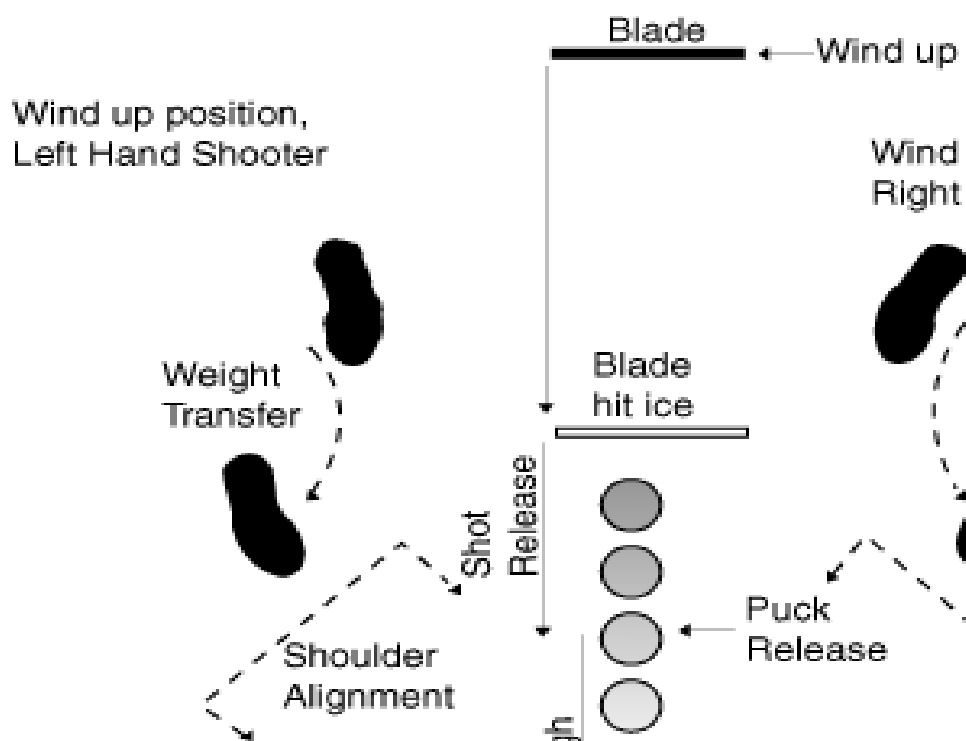
The **slap shot** is the most powerful and exciting shot in hockey. However, most of the time the slap shot ends up hitting the boards if players don't practice accuracy.

One of the most effective slap shot is the **low slap shot**. Try to keep the slap shot a few inches from the ice. At that height, your teammates have a good chance of deflecting the puck in the net and the goalie is easily screened by his/her own defenseman.

Use the proper stick grip and take on the proper hockey stance. For the **slap shot**, move your hand just past halfway down the shaft. Hold the stick tightly with both hands. Position your body parallel to the target. Position the puck 2 to 6 inches behind your front foot. The further back the puck is positioned, the easier it is to keep the shot low. Keep the line of shooting close enough to your body so you can transfer your body weight into the shot but far enough to provide good arm movement.

With your eye on your target, draw your stick back between your waist and your shoulder height. In this wind up (slingshot) position, your weight should be on your back leg. Drive your stick down, stepping and leaning into the shot, transferring your weight forward onto your stick through your lower hand.

Your stick should strike the shooting surface 2 to 3 inches before the puck. The contact with the puck should be made in the middle of the blade or a bit off centered toward the heel. The bending and whipping return of the shaft and the forward motion of the downswing is what creates the powerful force. As the puck rises off the shooting surface, snap your wrists. Continue with a low follow through pointing at the target and resume a balanced position with your weight fully transferred on your front leg.



PASSING:

The pass can be regarded as the simplest form of hockey shooting. Explain to players how hockey relies on passing because it is a team sport – nobody wants to be a puck-hog!

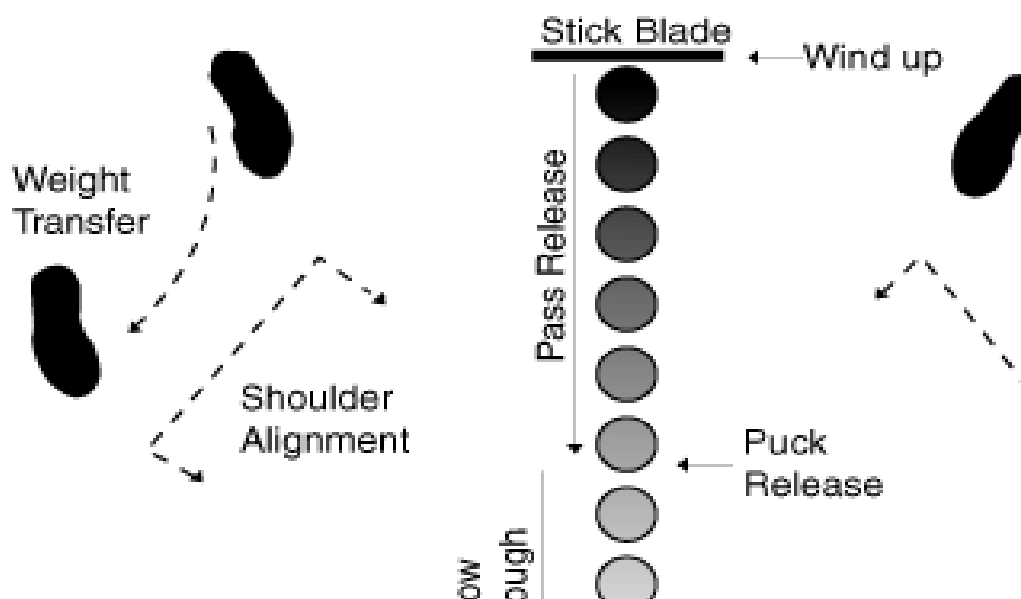
Young players should master the pass before learning any other hockey shot. They should practice both the forward and backhand passes. The focus should be on accuracy and not the strength of the pass.

Players should first focus on learning and practicing the pass motion while watching the puck and stick. Players can then work on mastering passing while looking up at their target.

THE FORWARD PASS:

Use the proper stick grip and take on the proper hockey stance. To set up for the **forward pass** bring the puck behind your back leg. Keep the puck in the middle of the stick blade. Rotate your wrist causing the blade to tilt over the puck. In this wind-up position, your body weight should be on the leg closest to the puck.

With your head up looking at your target, release the pass using a smooth sweeping motion (pull on your stick with your top hand and push on your stick with your bottom hand). Keep both hands out away from your body and keep adjusting your aim as your stick moves forward and your weight is transferred to your front leg. After the puck is released, follow through with the toe of the stick pointing at the target.

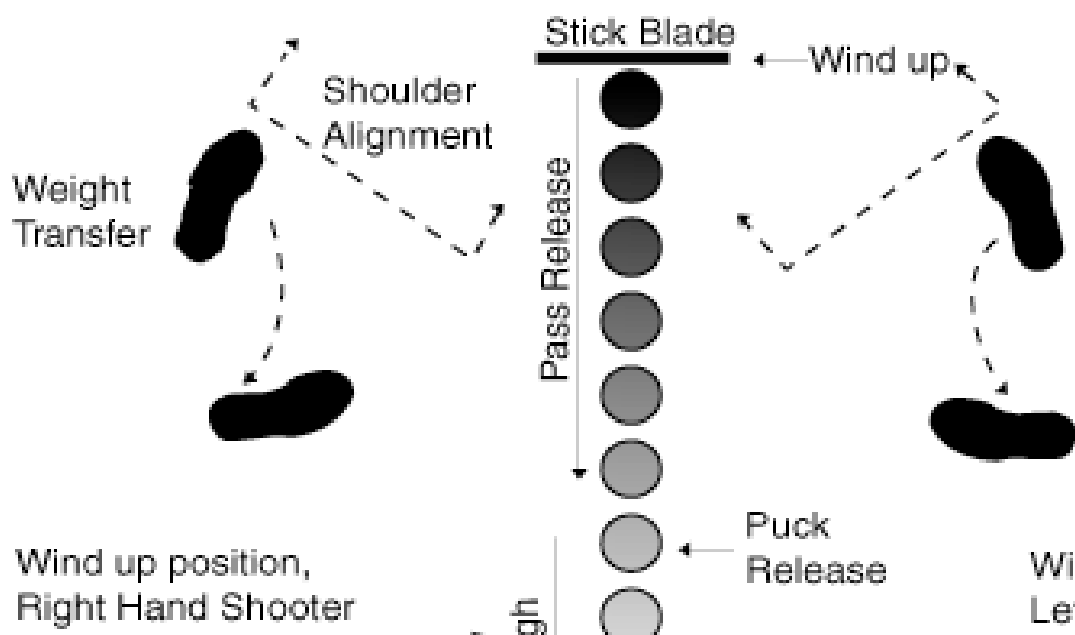


THE BACKHAND PASS:

The backhand pass is similar to the forehand pass except that it is made with the backside of the blade.

Use the proper stick grip and take on the proper hockey stance. To set up for the backhand pass, bring the puck behind your back leg. Keep the puck on the middle straight section of the blade close to the shaft. Rotate your wrist causing the blade to tilt slightly over the puck. In the wind-up position, your body weight should be on the leg closest to the puck.

With your head up looking at your target, release the backhand pass using a smooth sweeping motion (push on your stick with your top hand and pull on your stick with your bottom hand). Keep both hands out away from your body and keep adjusting your aim as your stick moves forward and your weight is transferred to your front leg. After the puck is released, follow through with the toe of the stick pointing at the target.



STICK HANDLING:

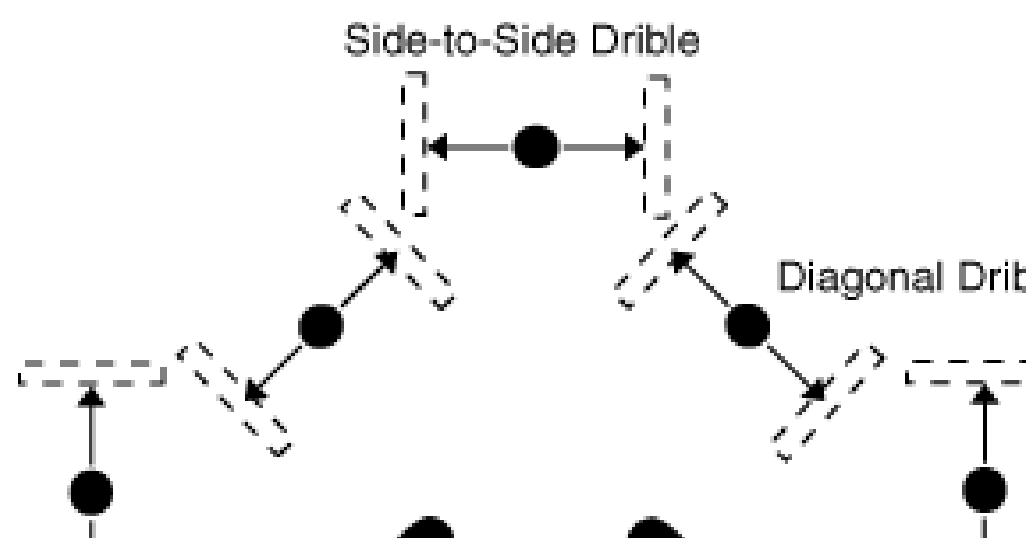
Stick handling is one of the most important fundamental skills in hockey. You need good stick handling skills to play heads up hockey, to take and maintain possession of the puck, to win face-offs, to receive and make passes and to shoot the puck.

Hockey players can practice stick handling both **on** and **off** the rink. The important thing, especially for young players, is to practice keeping control of the puck while always looking up at their teammates, goal, or passing target.

First, **stick handle** with your eyes fixed on the puck. Move the puck within a 12 to 18 inch span using a back and forth soft sweeping motion. Develop a comfortable rhythm, do not over handle the puck. There should be very little impact and almost no sound.

Practice **side-to-side dribble**, **forward-to-backward dribble** and **diagonal dribbling**. First master stick handling in a stationary position and then practice stick handling while moving forward, sideways, and backwards. Gradually take your eyes off the puck and fix them on your target or simply stick handle with your eyes closed.

Challenge players with dribbling obstacle courses made with cones. Coaches can also play Simon Says – giving specific dribbling and passing instructions. Coaches can lead a game of Red Light, Green Light with players racing to dribble the puck (without losing control) without being caught out still moving on a 'Red Light'.



Weekly Team Talks

Team Talk Week 1: Introductions

Spend some time getting to know each other. Make sure that each child has a chance to talk. The coach's role is to ask questions and let each player share an answer. Cover topics like names, favorite sports, hobbies, etc.

This is a good time to introduce some basic terms (players can volunteer to provide or demonstrate definitions): ready position, hockey stance, passing, dribbling, shooting, goalie, stick-handling, etc.

Team Talk Week 2: What makes a good athlete?

Introduce Players to the 4 YMCA Character Values: Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility. Explain how a good athlete isn't just a person who is fast or good at the game, but also a person who shows these values on and off the field. Each value will be explored more in depth in the following weeks.

If time allows, make sure players remember each other's names. A team chant or cheer could be developed to create team pride and bonding among the players.

Team Talk Week 3: Caring

Tell the players that one way of showing that you care is by doing kind things for people. Provide an example by using something you saw a player do on the field (helping another player who fell, cheering for teammates, handshakes with the opposing team, etc).

Ask the players to think of how they could show caring and kindness to members of their family (helping siblings, cleaning their room, washing dishes, etc.) Encourage each player to do one kind thing for a member of their family over the next week.

Team Talk Week 4: Honesty

Ask the players what caring things they did for their families last week as a follow up on last week's discussion.

Explain what honesty means in sports. What does it mean to play fairly? What does cheating mean? Why is that important in sports? Explore how honesty makes the game more fun for both teams.

Team Talk Week 5: Respect

Discuss the idea of cooperation/teamwork versus competition. Point out that the other team makes the game possible. Remember, we don't keep score in YMCA sports. How does this make respect even more important?

Ask the players to brainstorm ways to show respect to the other team (making positive comments to other players, shaking hands at the end of the game, etc).

Explain how you will cheer for the other team in this Saturday's game. Create a cheer your team can do to show support for the other team during the game.

Team Talk Week 6: Responsibility

In YMCA sports, every player gets equal playing time. This means that players are responsible for passing the ball, supporting teammates, and helping their teammates learn during practices.

One of the biggest responsibilities of a sports player is sportsmanship. How can players show good responsibility during the game? When they win? When they've lost? What does it mean for a player to show good responsibility by listening to their coach?

If time allows, discuss how each player can have a specific responsibility during their final game of the season. Examples include: leading cheers, handing players water, leading stretches, taking care of the game ball, leading the handshake after the game, passing out snacks.